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**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Order Instituting Rulemaking on the Commission's
Own Motion into the Service Quality Standards for
All Telecommunications Carriers and Revisions to
General Order 133-B.

Rulemaking 02-12-004
(Filed December 5, 2002)

**DECLARATION OF MICHAEL FERNANDEZ SUPPORTING THE OPENING
COMMENTS OF VERIZON CALIFORNIA INC. AND ITS CERTIFICATED
CALIFORNIA AFFILIATES**

May 14, 2007

I. WITNESS BACKGROUND

1. My name is Michael Fernandez. My business address is 240 East 38th Street, New York, New York 10016.
2. I am employed by Verizon as the Director - Customer Measurement Services.
3. I have a B.S. degree in Mathematics from the State University of New York College at Cortland. I also have an M.A. in Mathematical Education and an M.S. in Applied Statistics from Columbia University. I have twenty-six years experience in the telecommunications industry. During that tenure, I have worked in Finance, Business Research, Regulatory, Quality Services, Operations, and Business Planning. Currently I work in Performance Assurance.
4. As a director in Verizon's Performance Assurance Department, my primary responsibilities include survey design, sample design, data analysis, results reporting, and establishment of objectives for surveys performed by Verizon. I am accountable for the identification, validation, and reporting of key internal and external metrics that are predictive of customer satisfaction with Verizon's services. I am also accountable for designing and analyzing competitive benchmarking surveys that measure the perceptions and satisfaction levels of the customers of Verizon's competitors.

II. INTRODUCTION

5. The purpose of this declaration is to assist the Commission in evaluating whether a customer satisfaction survey of telecommunications services would be a useful policy tool for the Commission. I also describe Verizon's internal surveys regarding the service attributes that are indicators of customer satisfaction and I explain how those findings support the point that Dr. Debra Aron makes in her

declaration regarding the dangers of requiring providers to focus on the “wrong” service metrics at the expense of optimizing overall customer satisfaction.

6. The Commission should not lose sight of this docket’s substantive links to other proceedings. The Commission has determined overwhelmingly that the voice communications market in California is highly competitive, that consumers have many options, and that these findings hold throughout the traditional “service territories” of Verizon and the other large ILECs in California.¹ These findings fundamentally transform how the Commission should approach service quality regulation, as Dr. Aron discusses in greater detail, away from ILEC-focused service quality metrics and compliance standards towards relying on robust competition to deliver the service quality options that consumers actually demand.
7. My experience comports with Dr. Aron’s conclusions. For example, Dr. Aron correctly notes that it would be inadvisable for the Commission to sponsor a survey that seeks information about detailed customer service metrics because of the danger of picking the wrong metrics to survey – especially in the context of expanding intermodal competition.
8. Before designing any survey, it is important to be clear about its purpose and about what the data will (and will not) be used for. It is also important to recognize the limitations and the potential drawbacks of any Commission-sponsored survey. For example, the results of a customer satisfaction survey would not be sufficiently reliable to be used for enforcement purposes such as for

¹ See, e.g., D.06-08-030, *mimeo* at 265, Findings of Fact at 50-51, 275 (finding that Verizon, AT&T, SureWest, and Frontier lack market power throughout their service territories for residential as well as business customers).

identifying carriers against whom corrective action should be taken. Moreover, any survey that carries the Commission's imprimatur may have a chilling effect on competition by causing some providers to adjust their operations to score well on the *Commission's survey* rather than to maximize their customers' satisfaction through offering a combination of price and service attributes that they believe – based on their research – best differentiates their product in the competitive intermodal market.

9. I do not recommend that the Commission sponsor a customer satisfaction survey because there does not appear to be a policy purpose that such a survey would achieve. The only realistic policy purpose for such a survey would be to monitor customer satisfaction, perhaps as a supplement to the survey currently being contemplated in URF II, but the Commission has numerous other resources with which to achieve that purpose. The market produces various high-quality, publicly-available sources of customer satisfaction data, including syndicated customer satisfaction surveys by private parties such as the American Consumer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), Consumer Reports and J.D. Power and Associates, which the Commission can consult in order to evaluate customer satisfaction. I have no reason to believe that a Commission-sponsored survey could do a better job of monitoring customer satisfaction these market-based sources. In fact, the Commission could cause harm to the extent that it displaces such well-established, well-designed, publicly-available surveys.
10. If the Commission nevertheless decides to sponsor a customer satisfaction survey, it should be cognizant of the limitations of such a survey and should use “best practices” to ensure that the data are as useful as possible. In order to monitor

customer satisfaction in California's competitive market, the Commission could employ techniques similar to those used by Verizon in its "competitive benchmarking" surveys, which compare customer satisfaction across various competitors in California.

III. SURVEYING DONE BY VERIZON

A. Why And How Verizon Surveys Customer Satisfaction

11. Verizon continually strives to improve service because we believe better service enhances our ability to attract and retain customers. The surveys we conduct are a good way to listen to customers, to understand how and why their expectations and satisfaction levels are changing, and to identify the ways in which we need to modify our operations to ensure continuing high levels of customer satisfaction.
12. Verizon's California customers have consistently indicated high levels of satisfaction with the services Verizon provides. But our surveys go beyond simply asking our customers to grade us. We also ask them to tell us, in their own words, how we are doing and what we can do better. When we analyze the survey results, we look at the overall grades our customers give us, as well as specific comments about what improvements may be needed.
13. Verizon uses an outside market research firm to survey customers on virtually a daily basis. We interview over 1,000 California customers a month in order to get detailed information about various topics including Provisioning (which includes installation of new service), Repair (which includes diagnosis, repair, and restoration of existing service), and Request and Inquiry (which covers requests and inquiries directed to the Business Office regarding customer bills, products and services, prices, and company policies).

14. Verizon extensively surveys because we want to be able to identify and resolve issues quickly. Also, such extensive surveying ensures that on a monthly basis our survey results are statistically significant, meaningful, and reliable for use as a management tool. We do this because we operate in a competitive market and we believe that understanding our customers' service satisfaction levels is an important management and marketing tool for Verizon.

B. Identifying And Ranking The Service Attributes That Verizon's Customers Value

15. Verizon routinely identifies the attributes of customer service that have the most influence in determining overall customer satisfaction. These findings are communicated throughout the appropriate organizations, including to the technicians and service people who directly interact with customers. Each organization then develops action plans around the key attributes to increase customer satisfaction. That is, each organization and its employees focus on how to deliver – faster, better, more efficiently – what the customer wants.
16. Our analysis not only confirms *what* is important to our customers, it tells us in priority order which attributes provide the greatest opportunity to improve customer satisfaction. These surveys show that our customers value a quick response to their requests, a job done right the first time and maintaining close communications with them. Continuously reminding our employees of this information makes customer satisfaction a day-to-day priority.
17. For example, Verizon's key attributes analysis shows that keeping customers informed makes a very big difference in customer satisfaction. Verizon has translated this information into repair procedures that require technicians to notify the customer by telephone of arrival time, keep the customer informed as work is

performed, tell the customer if work is required elsewhere or if the technician is leaving, and confirm afterwards by telephone that the problem is repaired. This level of communication takes time and expense, and if Verizon were required to focus exclusively on the speed of the repair, for example, we might not do it. But since our surveys prove that customers value this kind of communication, we have made it part of our procedures.

18. These findings comport with Dr. Aron's economic critique of service quality reporting metrics. Dr. Aron points out that in a competitive market, each firm differentiates its products in ways that it believes will provide its customers with the best combination of price and service attributes. The very fact that Verizon (and I understand, other competitors) undertakes extensive internal surveying shows that the competitive environment causes firms to focus on optimizing customer satisfaction with their products and services. The Commission does not need to require firms to pay attention to customer satisfaction because firms already have powerful economic incentives to do so.
19. I also agree with Dr. Aron's conclusion that it would be inadvisable for the Commission to dictate particular service metrics. As described above, the service attributes that Verizon has found are most important to its customers' satisfaction do not necessarily correspond with the service attributes the Commission has historically measured. Especially in the context of intermodal competition, Commission-mandated service quality metrics could cause firms to focus their resources satisfying those metrics rather than maximizing their customers' satisfaction.

C. Measuring Customer Satisfaction Across Various Competitors

20. The Commission should note that the type of extensive and detailed surveying that Verizon does of its own customers cannot also be used for the Commission's policy purposes. Verizon's goal is to identify the key attributes that its customers care about, and to gauge its performance against those attributes to improve how it runs its business. On the other hand, the Commission is not running a business, but rather has a policy interest in monitoring customer satisfaction across multiple competitors in a complex intermodal market. If the Commission decides to sponsor a survey for that policy purpose, it should consider a different type of survey.
21. One type of survey whose purpose is similar to that of a possible Commission-sponsored survey involves "competitive benchmarking." Since 2004, Verizon has been conducting surveys to measure the service satisfaction of the residential customers of other service providers in order to respond to the demands of the competitive marketplace, and to see how Verizon compares to its competitors. The purpose of these competitive benchmarking surveys is to understand how Verizon and its competitors (including cable VoIP but not wireless) compare with respect to their customers' overall satisfaction levels. The techniques Verizon uses may be instructive should the Commission choose to employ a survey designed to monitor customer satisfaction.
22. Verizon's competitive benchmarking surveys measure Verizon's performance compared to key competitors in the following areas: (i) quality and reliability, (ii) products and services, (iii) customer service, (iv) billing, (v) pricing, and (v) reputation. In order to obtain useful comparative data, Verizon contracts with a

third-party consulting firm that conducts telephone surveys of residential customers across the country, including in California. The survey questions are relatively high-level, and the survey excludes wireless customers. The results are used by Verizon to design marketing strategies based on Verizon's comparative strengths, and to make changes based on its comparative weaknesses.

23. In contrast to Verizon's internal customer surveys, which are "transactional" in nature, its competitive benchmarking survey is a "relationship" survey that uses different questions and techniques. Thus, for example, Verizon's internal surveys draw from a pool of potential customer respondents who have recently interacted with Verizon service personnel (i.e., had a "transaction" with the company). This approach insures survey respondents with detailed, current knowledge of Verizon service, and is the best way to avoid impressionistic and stale answers by customers without a concrete recent experience with Verizon. This technique provides the best information about specific ways that Verizon can modify its own business processes to improve the customer experience.
24. On the other hand, Verizon's competitive benchmarking survey seeks to evaluate customers' overall relationship with their providers. Verizon therefore employs a "relationship" survey under which our third party survey firm randomly samples customers without regard to whether they have had recent "transactions" with their providers. Such an approach would not be useful for Verizon's internal customer survey purposes, as it would generate too many "impressionistic" and stale answers by customers without recent direct experiences with Verizon. Such a relationship survey, however, is the better approach for measuring customer satisfaction across various competitors because it measures customers' overall

relationships with their providers.

25. Because a Commission-sponsored survey would also seek to monitor customer satisfaction across competitors, a relationship technique would better achieve that goal, and indeed would be the *only* practical way for the Commission to do so. A transaction approach would present practical difficulties in that the Commission could not receive information from all providers in an unbiased and consistent format that would allow the survey firm to efficiently call an appropriate sample of customers – especially given the Commission’s lack of jurisdiction over certain providers (such as VoIP).
26. A related difference between Verizon’s internal customer satisfaction surveys and our competitive benchmarking survey is that the competitive benchmarking survey avoids seeking overly-detailed information about respondents’ perceptions of the delivery of particular services. As discussed above, because the competitive benchmarking survey is a relationship survey, such perceptions may be too stale or impressionistic, and therefore inaccurate. But more importantly, the purpose of the survey is to understand the overall competitive dynamics of the market, and relatively high-level questions about overall satisfaction levels that avoid confusing the respondent (and the survey reader) with too many details are most useful for that purpose.
27. In fact, seeking overly-detailed information about customer perceptions of specific service attributes could lead to misleading comparisons given that some metrics may not make sense for measuring certain competitors’ competitive strengths and weaknesses. For example, while it makes sense for Verizon’s internal surveys to ask details about repair procedures, such as whether the

repairman arrived on time, such questions may not be relevant – and could be confusing – to a VoIP customer whose troubleshooting issues may be more software-oriented and may not involve physical visits to the customer’s premises. Asking about physical visits could cause confusion (such as by confusing cable repair services, which would involve physical visits, with VoIP troubleshooting services, which may not) and could lead to misleading comparisons given the apples-to-oranges nature of the service delivery mechanisms. This is another reason why Verizon’s competitive benchmarking survey avoids seeking details about service delivery issues.

28. As discussed in the next section, if the Commission determines to sponsor a customer satisfaction survey, it should also avoid seeking details about particular service delivery issues. Such data would be neither accurate nor useful for the Commission’s monitoring purposes. Indeed, expanding the survey to seek data on particular service metrics could, as Dr. Aron notes, be anticompetitive because the survey could cause providers to focus on the particular metrics that are in the survey rather than on the mix of services and prices that would optimize their customers’ satisfaction.

IV. POTENTIAL GOALS AND INHERENT LIMITATIONS OF A COMMISSION-SPONSORED SURVEY

A. There is No “Information Gap” That Necessitates a Commission-Sponsored Survey

29. The Commission is not faced with an “information gap” with respect to customer satisfaction, and thus there is no apparent need for the Commission to sponsor a customer-satisfaction survey. There are numerous publicly-available surveys that measure customers’ satisfaction with their providers of communications services.

Such surveys are performed and made available to the public because there is a demand for such information, and numerous firms have entered that market. Survey results can be purchased or obtained for free from such providers as J.D. Power and Associates, Consumer Reports, Consumers' Checkbook, Yankee Group, In-Stat, Forrester Research Inc., and The American Consumer Satisfaction Index.

30. Such existing surveys provide a wealth of data about customer satisfaction across various competitors, and the Commission can use them to monitor customer satisfaction developments in the market. I have no reason to believe that the Commission could do a better job of generating and processing useful data about customer satisfaction than such experienced organizations and market sources.
31. In fact, if the Commission enters the market for assessing customer satisfaction, it risks causing confusion to the extent that its survey may measure the wrong things and/or may be inferior to market-based products. Given the Commission's high visibility and the fact that consumers would presumably be able to view the survey results for free on its Web site, the Commission's survey could displace well-designed market-based surveys (many of which have been around for many years) that may in fact provide consumers with better and more relevant information.
32. The reasons for not sponsoring a survey are particularly strong with respect to wireless customers, for which there are particularly good sources of customer satisfaction survey data. For example, two key sources of information, Consumer Reports and Consumers' Checkbook, do an excellent job of publishing the results of high-quality mail and internet surveys of their members' satisfaction with their

wireless providers. Consumer Reports, in particular, has been conducting such surveys for years and has published trend analyses. Such established, market-driven surveys are at least as good as any survey the Commission might design.²

B. Limitations of Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

33. The Commission should also consider the fact that in all surveys there is the potential for inconsistent or even misleading results. The Commission could not have enough confidence in the results of a consumer satisfaction survey to use them to identify “underperforming” service providers for which corrective measures should be considered. Attempting to do so would involve an unacceptably high risk of “false positives,” which are situations where the data suggest a problem although one does not in fact exist. Other tools available to the Commission, such as the complaint process, constitute far better monitoring devices if the policy goal is to identify and correct service quality problems.
34. The intermodal nature of California’s telecommunications market provides yet another reason to not use the results of a customer satisfaction survey for enforcement purposes. As I discuss above, it is difficult to figure out what the “right” metrics are to measure, and forcing providers to focus on the “wrong” metrics could actually cause competitive harm.
35. Moreover, customers may have different quality expectations of different types of competitors, meaning that their perceptions of service quality may not correspond with their overall satisfaction levels based on the value of the combination of price and service that they are receiving. In other words, given different customer

² Also, there are well-known methodological challenges associated with surveying wireless customers. For example, wireless customers who have “cut the cord” would be excluded from the wireline number survey, which could be a source of bias. That problem was discussed in the URF Phase II workshop held on

expectations of different types of services, customer satisfaction trends across intermodal platforms may not provide a good picture of the relative competitive strengths and weaknesses of different competitors – and would therefore be of limited value from a policy point of view.

C. “Best Practices” If the Commission Chooses to Sponsor a Survey

36. If the Commission nevertheless is interested in sponsoring a customer satisfaction survey to monitor wireline customer satisfaction, I recommend that it consider using techniques similar to those employed in Verizon’s “competitive benchmarking” survey that I describe in the previous section. Employing appropriate techniques and methodologies would maximize the usefulness of the data and minimize the risk of inconsistent (and misleading) results.
37. First, the questions should be high-level in nature. The Commission should resist any impulse to seek detailed data about particular service attributes. As I explain in Section III-C, such details are irrelevant to comparing customer satisfaction across various intermodal providers, would be of questionable accuracy, and could lead to misleading conclusions about competitive dynamics. Moreover, as Dr. Aron points out in her declaration, a survey bearing the Commission’s imprimatur that drills down on the wrong service quality metrics could have anticompetitive consequences because it could cause providers to focus on improving the metrics in the survey rather than maximizing customer satisfaction.
38. Second, a Commission-sponsored survey should seek to fill gaps in information at a high-level on customer satisfaction, but should not seek to replicate available information, e.g., about wireless carriers. As discussed in the previous section,

the existing publicly-available information about that the wireless sector is particularly good, and the challenges associated with surveying such customers are high.

39. Third, the survey should be done by an independent third party with expertise in conducting surveys in the communications industry. Requiring service providers to conduct customer satisfaction surveys of their own customers would likely result in significant inconsistencies because of differences in the ways the survey would be conducted and differences in techniques for identifying and contacting potential respondents.
40. Fourth, it is usually preferable that the survey be done by telephone. Telephone surveys generally have much higher response rates than mail surveys, and minimizing non-response bias is an important goal. Telephone surveys offer better responses to open-ended questions than self-administered surveys (due to probing); they offer more control over the order of presentation of questions (versus the skipping ahead that might occur with self-administration); and they provide better success in avoiding non-responses given that the interviewer can keep questions from being skipped or missed.
41. Finally, care must be taken to ensure that the survey employs statistically sound methodologies, such as determining appropriate sample sizes and significance levels. I would be happy to explore such issues in depth, if and when the Commission chooses to sponsor a survey and decides on a particular format.

* * *

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of California that the foregoing is true.

Executed in New York, New York, on May 14, 2007.

/s/ Michael M. Fernandez

Michael M. Fernandez

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that: I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within entitled action; my business address is 711 Van Ness Ave., Ste. 300, San Francisco, CA 94102; I have this day served a copy of the foregoing:

**DECLARATION OF MICHAEL FERNANDEZ SUPPORTING THE OPENING
COMMENTS OF VERIZON CALIFORNIA INC. AND ITS CERTIFICATED
CALIFORNIA AFFILIATES**

by electronic mail to those parties on the service list shown below who have supplied an e-mail address, and by U.S. mail to all other parties on the service list.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.
Executed this 14th day of May, 2007, at San Francisco, California.

/s/Sonja Killingsworth

SONJA KILLINGSWORTH

Service List:

R.02-12-004

CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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